



NEWS RELEASE

VIRGINIA AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE

National Agricultural Statistics Service • United States Department of Agriculture

P.O. Box 1659 • Richmond, Virginia 23218-1659 • Phone (804) 771-2493

Internet: nass-va@nass.usda.gov • World Wide Web: <http://www.nass.usda.gov/va>

Contact: Steven Manheimer, State Statistician

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VIRGINIA'S WHEAT CROP FORECAST BELOW LAST YEAR

The 2000 Virginia wheat crop is expected to total 13,325,000 bushels according to the initial season forecast just released by the Virginia Agricultural Statistics Service. The initial production forecast was based on May 1 conditions and if realized would be 355,000 bushels below last year's harvest. Despite an 8 bushel per acre increase in yield over the 1999 crop, the production decrease can be attributed to a decrease in acreage. Virginia's producers plan to harvest 205,000 acres yielding 65 bushels per acre. Last year, producers harvested 240,000 acres of wheat, yielding 57 bushels per acre. The record high yield of 67 bushels per acre was in 1997.

Cool temperatures and rainy, wet conditions kept the crop in the dormant stage longer than in previous years. This caused some fungicide problems that were chemically treated. Despite these problems, wheat was rated in good to excellent condition by the end of April.

U.S. WHEAT PRODUCTION DOWN 3 PERCENT

Winter wheat production is forecast at 1.65 billion bushels, down 3 percent from 1999. Based on May 1 conditions, the U.S. yield is forecast at 47.5 bushels per acre, 0.3 less than last year's record. If realized, this would be the second highest yield on record. Record yields are forecast in Ohio and North Carolina. Grain area totals 34.7 million acres, down 2 percent from last season. Dry conditions in Texas have led to abnormally high abandonment.

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***Virginia Agriculture Statistics Service
Agricultural Statistician
P.O. Box 1659
Richmond, Virginia 23218***

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